

Transcript of U/S John Rood Background Briefing for Wire Services and Polish Journalists Warsaw, 15:00 August 20, 2008

After Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice held a roundtable with American, Polish, and wire service journalists in the Sheraton Hotel in Warsaw, Poland, Acting Undersecretary of State John Rood met with the Polish and wire service journalists to answer their remaining questions concerning the Missile Defense Agreement that Secretary Rice and Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radoslaw Sikorski had signed earlier that day. The transcript of that conversation follows.

U/S Rood

I just wanted to be available in case there were any particular questions. You've obviously heard from the Secretary of State throughout the day, but if there are any specific follow-up questions that need clarification, I'd be happy to try to provide that.

Question

I have a follow-up [garbled] regarding the American guarantees towards Poland. Does it really give any additional guarantees other than we already have in Article 5?

U/S Rood

The declaration on strategic cooperation speaks to the desire of the two countries to pursue a substantially deepened defense and security relationship and this is an important and meaningful step by the governments because we have not only undertaken – agreed to undertake – a form of cooperation with respect to missile defense, we've also agreed in that declaration that the United States would deploy a Patriot battery – Patriot air and missile defense battery – here in Poland and there's also a commitment to go further in areas such as defense industrial cooperation, sharing of intelligence information and to create the means for the Polish armed forces to better equip themselves, whether that be through assistance from the United States as well as assistance with things such as acquisition reform, export controls – so it is a broad-based declaration that speaks to the desire of the countries for an expanded strategic relationship.

Question

Because it's not legally binding means that the next administration can say that "we'll not send", they'll not send Patriot batteries to Poland – it's possible?

U/S Rood

The relationship that the United States enjoys with Poland is close and we're engaged in a range of cooperate activities. For example, I think the activity that we're both involved in Afghanistan is very important to the security not only our two countries but indeed of the rest of our NATO allies. The new area of cooperation that we've talked about is also important and I think as Secretary of State said, that the fundamental values that bring the

countries together, fundamental desire to address terrorist threats together and to provide the ability to help the Polish armed forces contribute to broader security missions that are important to NATO, I think that's something, the value of which is going to be recognized by future administration of whatever party they come from. And I think being able to deal with the growth in ballistic missile and weapons of mass destruction capabilities around the world is also something that's very important and I think that a future administration will see the value of that as well.

Question

And the last question if I may, is there any chance that America would agree... on setting another batteries, Patriot missiles on preferential conditions toward Poland? Because it was the initial...

U/S Rood

We have engaged in conversations with our Polish colleagues about a range of defense modernization questions, there is some interest on the part of the Polish government in purchasing Patriot air defenses for the Polish armed forces and I think that we in the US are prepared to have a discussion about that and we're willing to proceed along those lines in the United States. Obviously these are, these kinds of procurement discussions are – can take time. Specialists need to work through those. And on our part [garbled]... And indeed the United States has sold similar, the same kind of system, Patriot system, to other allies in Europe, the Netherlands has procured a system for instance, Germany for many years has owned and operated Patriot units, that they procured from US, so we, this is the sort of cooperation that we would be prepared to engage in with the Polish government. But indeed it's not limited to Poland as I mentioned, we've previously engaged in this form of cooperation with other allies in Europe.

Question

Thank you very much.

Question

Could I just follow up on what my colleague was asking? Would in the case that the US agreed, came to some form of agreement with Poland about sending it more Patriots, would that be at a friendship price or would that be some other part of the deal, that came from today's agreement?

U/S Rood

There, in today's agreement, the document doesn't speak to the sale of, specifically the sale of Patriot air defenses to Poland, but as I've said the U.S. is prepared to have that discussion with our Polish colleagues. And when you talk about the transfer of an advanced military system like Patriot, there are a range of activities that need to be conducted, it's not merely that you hand over this item for a price across the counter, there is training, there is maintenance, there are a whole range of things that are done in order to establish the infrastructure and other things for a system like that and the U.S. practice whether that would be with F16 sales to Poland or would that be with other types of defense equipment that we've sold around the world, is that we customarily do engage

in that kind of cooperation with our partners. And that would be my expectation here. I don't want to lead you to believe, I want to be clear, we've not negotiated any specific arrangements with respect to this yet, but there is a willingness on our part to proceed down that path that the polish government is willing to. And they've shown interest, they've not made any formal commitments, expressions of interest, so I don't want to mislead you to think there is more advanced level of discussion than there is.

Question

But I understand in that case the training and maintenance would then be a gift on a part of the administration?

U/S Rood

And did I say that?

Question

I'm asking...

U/S Rood

I think all of those things, to be frank, are to be determined. You have to work out a package of arrangements with regard to the sale of any advanced system like this and it's just premature to frankly speculate about what the specific details would be.

Question

So we are just being misled by our own government.

U/S Rood

I'm sorry?

Question

We are just being misled on that by our own government, because the main line of the government is essentially that it's opening up the process of acquisition of armor from the U.S.....

U/S Rood

Well, and that's why we've had a discussion with the Polish government in the defense modernization working group when we first looked at what are the likely threats facing Poland and exchanged analyses in that regard, and assess the current capabilities of the Polish armed forces and the shortfalls in capabilities – those that exist today and those that are projected to exist in the coming years – and then talked about potential ways to fill those shortfalls, and it's in that area that's really the focus now of our work and I think, on the basis of this declaration, we are prepared to engage in a very substantial effort in that regard and that will involve substantial assistance from the United States as to which particular systems and types of equipment the Polish government may choose to procure from the United States or elsewhere. That, I don't believe has been determined yet, but on our part, we are prepared to assist with that and that assistance could take a number of forms, whether that be financial assistance, whether that be advise expertise,

as you said training, these all have substantial value. But more than – there was someone at the earlier press roundtable that asked the question: what's the specific dollar value of a particular cooperation? I always find that question interesting, because, what's the value of a close defense relationship between our two countries? What is the, if you can, can someone can attach a dollar value to what it is to live in the knowledge that there are security guarantees embodied in NATO article 5? What's the value of being able to pursue our way of life? – very difficult things to attach some sort of accounting-dollar-figure to.

Question

I have two technical questions, if I may. One is, there was a report early after the signing of the Czech Agreement in the Washington Post I believe, saying that the Czechs had in the agreement a promise of coverage to the AEGIS system, the sea-based missile defense system. I don't know if that's correct, but I would like to know whether there is such a provision in the current agreement or is it technically impossible for Poland to be covered from the sea? And the second point was, it seems, at least from the Polish reports from what the government sources in Poland say, there has been a breakthrough when Poland decided to host the American garrison and I wanted to ask – was the reason for the American side to press on that if they didn't want to hand over a battery that is in use, so they wanted to hand it over only together with the personnel? Was that more or less the deal?

U/S Rood

What we've agreed to do in the agreement, just to clarify, because I think it's a little different than you characterize, is that firstly with respect to what the U.S. will do on the Patriot is we've agreed to begin the deployment of a United States Army Patriot battery here in Poland. The Patriot battery would remain a part of United States Army, would be owned and operated by the US army. We will begin that deployment once we've made the necessary arrangements, that could be as early as next year, but we have jointly established as the goal with, that is to say the United States government and the Polish government have tried to establish, the goal to establish by 2012 a garrison to house the Patriot battery here in Poland and that would be a United States Army Patriot battery, so again owned and operated by the US army. What was substantial is that the United States took that step. We regard it also as very significant, the commitment of the Polish government, which was offered late in the negotiations, and you see embodied in the strategic declaration which is that the Polish government is willing to furnish the site, the infrastructure and the necessary facilities to support this garrison.

Question

If I may, would you say that your side, or you personally changed your position, your negotiating position from July the 4th when our Prime Minister made the declaration or it is more less the same position all the time?

U/S Rood

I'd say, as I mentioned, there were, in any negotiation that I've been involved in, there are ups and downs, this is normal, but we never lost contact in a sense that, no matter

how high up we were, how low we were, we maintained very regular conversations and communications between the US and Polish negotiation teams. There was, I don't think, in the negotiations, ever a moment where we got behind fixed lines and remained hunkered down there. I think, what you saw in the last stage of the negotiations, the last month or two here, has been movement on both parties, to, because there was a shared objective to bridge the gap. And at times, I will tell you, as a negotiator it's not always, you don't immediately see the ways to bridge differences sometimes, but as I mentioned earlier, it was very significant, the Polish government's willingness to commit to the statement that's in the strategic declaration, not only to furnish the site, but the facilities and the infrastructure to support establishment of a Patriot garrison here, in Poland, a U.S. army Patriot garrison. And so, both sides showed flexibility in this last period of time.

Question

Just to come back to the question of my colleague here, I don't know if these situations are comparable, it's about this American AEGIS... That is, could you compare those two agreements and is this ... about this system apply to Poland, or how it is really?

U/S Rood

What was referred, when the Secretary of State visited Prague to sign the missile defense agreement with, between the United States and the Czech Republic, she spoke of the importance of that radar that will be established in the Czech Republic, not only for the usage with the interceptors for instance that we have now agreed to deploy in Poland, but for other missile defense systems as well, such as AEGIS. So, an AEGIS ship, if it were in the vicinity, could utilize the radar data from the X Band radar that we deployed for the Czech Republic, to launch its own interceptors, wherever that may be, and as a result of using that radar, they will be more effective. I try not to give you an overly technical example, but if there is an incoming missile, when a ship uses its radar, you can only see a certain distance, and when the incoming missile flies into that radar then it can detect it, process, place and you fire, they fire the interceptor. But you are limited by the range of the radar, until you can detect the incoming. If you rely on a radar, say an X Band radar, that's located somewhere else and you detect that incoming missile sooner, you can fire your interceptor much sooner, and the range of your own ship-based radar may only be here, but this interceptor can fly further and on the usage of this radar data, you can intercept the missile at a greater range. And if you take then what does that mean, it means, if the ship is here and the radar there, the defended footprint is much larger. And as a result of that usage of that other radar, the ship can defend a much larger area than if left to rely only on its on-board sensors. So, I understand it's a bit of a technical explanation but that's what the Secretary of State was trying to speak to when she was in Prague. I read the U.S. press report you're talking about, it was, I think, a little garbled, because this is what she was referring to, this radar in the Czech Republic, will have benefit, not only to be used with interceptors in Poland, but to support other missile defense systems. And some of these are operated, as I mentioned, by other NATO allies, take the Patriot systems, that some of the other NATO allies are using. If they utilize this sensor data, they can also be more effective, they can defend the slightly larger area, with

the Patriot missile. So, it's that radar in the Czech Republic will be a benefit to number of NATO allies. And we'll make that data available.

Question

The point of this question was, is there anything in the Czech – U.S. agreement?

U/S Rood

The Czech – U.S. agreement doesn't speak to the AEGIS system, it's all with the respect to hosting of a missile defense radar, but the part that is, well it doesn't use the word AEGIS in that agreement, what I'm trying to say is that this radar does have a benefit for the AEGIS system, and it can benefit all NATO allies.

Question

Don't you think that this radar is trying to be more valuable element of the whole system, than what you are going to house in Poland, so why it is not more protected than the future base in Poland?

U/S Rood

Is the radar more important than the interceptors was your question, essentially? They're part of the system, and there are several elements that are parts of the system...

Question

more expensive

U/S Rood

It's not more expensive as a dollar value, no, the cost of construction of the interceptors, here in Poland, will be higher than the cost of construction of the radar in the Czech Republic. But, they're elements of a system. There are other elements by the way, that are located on UK soil, [garbled] There is a radar there. There is another radar on Danish soil in Greenland, called Tuli, and then of course a radar in the Czech Republic, interceptors here in Poland are envisioned, and other sensors that United States deployed in space, space-based satellites and so on. So, there are number of important elements, and all of them need to work together and can work together, so I wouldn't say one is more important, per se, than the other; they're just different parts of this system.

Question

May I just ask, one last short question?

U/S Rood

I'm sorry, I would stay longer, but I don't want to miss my flight. I have to go to Vienna.

Question

If you compare the agreement, the Polish-U.S. agreement that has been rejected in July by Prime Minister Tusk to the one that has been signed today, would you say that there is a substantial difference in these two agreements?

U/S Rood

There were significant differences, as I said, in the last phase of the negotiations, both sides continued to work for a good outcome, and both sides showed some flexibility and there were movements in positions by the Polish negotiators, by the American negotiators, because we both wanted this kind of strategic cooperation. And I'd say, as you saw today, I think both sides are very satisfied with the results of the negotiations. And I do think that we will look back on this date here in 2008 as very significant for the relationship between the two countries. I think – it's an over statement, I guess overused term – but I really do think this is a landmark agreement.

Question

But your commitment as far as Patriot missiles are concerned, was it different from what was on the 4th of July and what we have now?

U/S Rood

Let me leave a little mystery to the negotiations, I can't reveal all the details, but let me just say that there were movements, as I mentioned, by both of the governments, in the last phase and they were significant movements, these are not sort of moving a comma or something, both sides made significant, substantial movements and that was important. We really wanted to conclude a good agreement, and my Polish counterparts were always very serious about that. In any negotiations, as I said, there are high points and low points, but I never lost faith in the strong partnership and the strong desire of my counterparts on the Polish delegation to get this done.

Question

One, off the record, on a lighter note?

U/S Rood

Yes sir?

Question

Have you read the Mr Waszczykowski interview to polish press and [laughter, garbled]...?

U/S Rood

The direct answer to your question is – yes I've read it.

Question

And do you miss Mr Waszczykowski as a partner in the negotiations?

U/S Rood

[silence, farewells]